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ABSTRACT

In the primary article, the societal norms that encourage violence against women are reviewed, from both the current and historical viewpoints. Violence in all its forms when used on adolescent women is a contributing factor in many other problems. Both young men and young women learn stereotypes and misinformation about women provoking violence through their behavior and fail to realize the issue is power over women. These stereotypes are learned, and schools can play a part in education for nonviolence. A number of techniques are suggested, including teaching gender equity, violence prevention, conflict resolution, health education, and peer leadership. These should be supplemented with staff training, curriculum integration, parent involvement, support services for both male and female victims, and rehabilitation and disciplinary programs. A secondary article in the digest, "Conference on Sexual Violence and Adolescents Highlights Need for Treatment and Intervention," by Michele Caterina, reports on a Massachusetts conference -- Sexual Assault and Adolescents: A Hidden Epidemic. The conference dealt with four topics: (1) the limits violence imposes on victims; (2) abused people often become abusers; (3) widespread societal violence; and (4) males are raised to expect power and be aggressive. Underlying these topics is the theme that stereotypes which portray violence against women as normal are apparent throughout American society. Adolescents are susceptible to these stereotypes, especially if they see them in their own lives or in the media. (KM)

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By Debra J. Robbin, Ed.M.

Violence against women and girls is one of the most disturbing aspects of living in a culture that promotes a hierarchy of power in human relationships according to class, race, and gender, among other divisions. In the United States, a woman is more likely to be assaulted, injured, raped, or murdered by a male partner than by any other type of attacker. According to the National Woman Abuse Prevention Project, approximately 3 to 4 million women are beaten each year and more than 1,000 women—an estimated 4 per day—are murdered by their husbands or partners.[1] Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop found that domestic violence is *the* single largest cause of injury to women: it is estimated that a woman is battered every 15 seconds.[2] Sexual assault is considered to be the fastest growing yet least reported crime. According to statistics, a rape is committed every 6 minutes. At current rates, 1 woman in 4 will be sexually assaulted in her lifetime.[3]

Former U.S. Surgeon General C. Everett Koop found that domestic violence is the single largest cause of injury to women: it is estimated that a woman is battered every 15 seconds.

These acts are not, however, isolated acts of psychopaths. If viewed on a continuum, we witness a direct connection between acts of differential or preferential treatment, verbal slurs, and various forms of harassment, with some of the more "obvious" violence seen in brutal acts such as battering, rape, and murder. All stem from cultural norms that socialize males to be aggressive, powerful, unemotional, and controlling, and that contribute to a social acceptance of men as dominant. Similarly, expectations of females as passive, nurturing, submissive, and emotional also reinforce women's roles as weak, powerless, and dependent upon men.

These norms serve to create stereotyped gender-role definitions in which males are encouraged to exercise control and authority aggressively. As a result, violence against women and girls has become part of the social fabric, and violence against females becomes a gender equity issue.

Our educational system is one of the primary purveyors of cultural—or at least dominant cultural—norms. For many years, gender equity scholarship has documented evidence of this hierarchy of power within school systems in terms of student achievement, teacher-student interaction, curriculum materials, learning styles, classroom behaviors, and so on.[4] Such bias reinforces sex-role stereotyping and mythical images of what is supposedly "appropriate" male and female behavior.

While it is generally agreed that sex-role stereotyping contributes to narrowly defined expectations about human potential, limited career options for males and females, and mixed messages about the world which contradict daily life experience, the social costs of such stereotyping have not been fully explored in the educational arena. When we begin to examine issues of violence, sex-role stereotyping reveals itself as one of the instruments that perpetuates dominant and subordinate relationships in our culture.

A legacy of violence

Although gender-based violence has received recent attention as a serious societal problem, it is hardly a new phenomenon. In fact, a history of violence against women and girls has promoted a tolerance and acceptance of widespread abuse of females. For example, under English common law, a husband had complete legal authority to control his wife through physical force. The expression "rule of thumb" actually refers to the English common law that allowed a husband to physically

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Gender-based violence . . . continued

attack his wife, provided he did not use anything thicker than his thumb.[5] In the United States, a husband's right to abuse his wife was legally upheld; it was not until 1871 that wife beating was actually declared illegal, and then only in two states—Alabama and Massachusetts.[6]

Popular culture —including television, movies, and music—often reinforces the notion that women enjoy being abused, that it is a positive masculine trait to control women.

The tacit approval of domestic violence as a means of enforcing power has continued right up to this day. The phrase "a man's home is his castle" sends a message that such violence is a private matter. This ideology has been upheld for years, evidenced by police and community reluctance to get involved in "domestic" matters.

There is still a widely held belief that women provoke violence or are somehow deserving of abuse. Popular culture—including television, movies, and music—often reinforces the notion that women enjoy being abused, that it is a positive masculine trait to control women, and that these stereotyped notions of what it means to be male and female are natural. One has only to watch a few minutes of MTV, or a movie aimed at teenagers, to see many instances of women falling in love with males who control them and to see a multitude of stereotypically beautiful women as victims. While we have tended to consider battering and rape as "adult" issues, it is increasingly evident that educators must begin to address sexist violence both in its direct impact on students' lives and as a component of gender equity programming.

Violence against adolescents

In recent months, statistics have been released that show a dangerous path for adolescent girls, such as decreased self-esteem, a correlation between childhood sexual abuse and teen pregnancy, an increased rate of teen pregnancy, a high risk for contracting AIDS and other sexually transmitted diseases, widespread incidence of sexual harassment, and an escalation of dating violence.[7]

We have only recently begun to consider the incidence of sexual violence among adolescents. Most violence against children and adolescents—as with adults—is committed by family members or friends. A study on the incidence of sexual assault in Massachusetts reported that out of the 7,254 incidents reported to publicly funded rape crisis centers over a three-year period, only 18 percent stated that their attacker was a stranger: "[A]mong child victims under age 13, 62 percent were assaulted by a parent or other relative; strangers accounted for only 3 percent of the reported incidents in the under 13 age group."[8] And adolescent females are at much greater risk for sexual assault than males. These statistics raise an imperative for educators to consider the incidence of violence against adolescents as a serious issue, and for institutions to be knowledgeable and equipped to provide help or refer students to appropriate services.

Learning a violent culture

Recognition of violence is the first step in addressing this issue; however, schools must go beyond this in order to create an appropriate response. Adolescence is a time of potential crisis, for both females and males. The need to fit in and respond to peer pressure and social expectations can be particularly difficult for teenagers. As adolescents internalize the cultural norms that reinforce sex-role stereotyping, they also increase their vulnerability to experiencing violence and abuse, as victims and/or perpetrators.

For example, a study conducted by the Rhode Island Rape Crisis Center in 1988 found that both adolescent males and females already had very stereotypical notions about issues such as consent and expectations relating to sexual assault. Of the 1,700 young adolescents surveyed, more than one-half thought that "if a woman dresses seductively and walks alone at night, she is asking to be raped"; over 24 percent thought that "if incest happens to someone over the age of 12, it could be the child's fault"; and at least 20 percent of the students agreed that, in each of several situations, a man had the right to sexual intercourse against a woman's consent.[9]

In a recent study of convicted rapists, Diana Scully interviewed men who had committed gang rape, most of whom had been convicted when they were of high school age. A number among them did not consider raping female hitchhikers as "rape" because the men believed these women were signaling their sexual availability. And similarly, females walking alone at night were considered by a number as fair game, because "women who walk alone at night are prostitutes, and, of course, prostitutes have no rights."[10]

Scully also found that most gang rape is seen as a form of recreation. To most of the young men she interviewed, gang "rape was just another form of delinquent activity, a rite of passage, and a male bonding activity. Part of the appeal was the sense of male camaraderie engendered by participating collectively in a dangerous activity."[11]

These studies show that stereotypes and misinformation about women provoking violence are already pervasive among young people. While we need to show young women how to protect themselves, these findings also demonstrate strongly that we need to help young men reject a culture that tells them relationships are based on showing power over others and that, as males, they need to prove their masculinity by exercising this type of power.

The role of schools

In that schools are a microcosm of society at large, it is important to examine the ways in which educational environments may foster and perpetuate a tolerance of gender-based violence. These

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Conference on sexual violence and adolescents highlights need for treatment and intervention

By Michele Caterina, Center for Equity and Cultural Diversity

As the issue of sexual violence gains more attention in our society, through media coverage, introduction of new legislation, and advocating by women's groups, many organizations are realizing that education is necessary and intervention essential. Schools are increasingly being recognized as valuable sites for interventions because they reach large numbers at ages when education can be particularly effective, and is desperately needed.

A recent Massachusetts conference—Sexual Assault and Adolescents: A Hidden Epidemic—brought together public health workers and school-based educators to share ideas and models, and to strategize together on future collaborations. This forum was one of the few instances in which these two groups have together explored ways that sexual violence affects education.

Four main themes ran through this conference, which was sponsored by the Massachusetts Department of Public Health Women's Health Unit and Office of Violence Prevention, together with the Massachusetts Coalition of Battered Women Service Groups and the Massachusetts Coalition of Rape Crisis Services. The first, that violence limits options and robs individuals of the freedom to develop to their full potential. Second, abuse tends to occur in cycles. Someone who was abused as a child is likely to abuse their children, perpetuating a cycle of violence.

A third theme was the pervasiveness of violence in our society. A number of presenters spoke about how our society continues to solve problems through aggression. Since this is what is modeled by adults and leaders, children learn that violence is an appropriate response to problems. Finally, boys in this country are acculturated to exercise power over others, and one of the ways this shows itself is through sexual violence. Therefore, while interventions to help girls are very important, work must also be done to heal males.

Keynote speaker Byllye Avery, founder of the National Black Women's Health Project and visiting fellow at the Harvard School of Public Health, opened the conference with a look at the psychology of young women caught in a cycle of dating violence. Avery focused the issue clearly with her reminder that "we need to make young women know that they were all born warm, restful, creating human beings and they were not put here to be messed with." She pointed out that dating violence is largely an issue of lack of self-esteem and that girls experiencing it start to believe they deserve the violence being inflicted on them.

Teens may be especially susceptible, Avery continued, to the sex roles presented in society that are overwhelmingly stereotypical and that often portray sexual violence as the norm or as glamorous. In many cases, these teens may be predisposed to accept sexual violence because of their exposure to it in their own homes or through the media. For that reason, it is essential for adults who can influence or even just come in contact with teens to be aware of the warning signs before the cycle of violence is repeated. Some of the clues that a young woman may be experiencing date violence or rape are physical bruises or other signs of physical injury; truancy or missed classes; sudden or increased social isolation; difficulty in making decisions; sudden changes in mood or personality; use of alcohol or drugs; pregnancy; crying for no apparent reason; or getting hysterical or overreacting to minor incidents. Recognizing some of these signs and responding sensitively to the fears and concerns of the young woman involved might help her realize that she no longer need be the victim and that she can break the cycle of violence.

Additionally, Avery urged all to ask why this problem is happening in our society. She reasons that if we ask the questions, we will think harder, and thinking harder leads to the realization that adolescent sexual violence is a pervasive problem in our society. Date violence and rape, like all other types of sexual violence, are an issue of power. Avery reminded participants that there is power in a man forcing a woman to have sex with him. There is power in a teenage boy physically abusing his girlfriend. And there is power in our society creating a system that perpetuates this cycle of violence both by its failure to acknowledge the problem and by the lack of sufficient legislation to protect women and girls.

Adolescent sexual violence is a pervasive problem in our society. Date violence and rape, like all other types of sexual violence, are an issue of power.

Avery's remarks were supported by a participant who had been in prison serving time for committing sexually violent crimes. He noted that there are no programs "behind the wall" to treat sex offenders. He acknowledged that these offenders need to be punished but they also should be treated to prevent the crimes from recurring. The chilling fact is that, without treatment, these men go back to their community and commit the same crimes again and again. Programs that address the problems these men have and that work on treating them are absolutely essential, although, even with programs, many offenders repeat their violence.

In the subsequent panel discussion, Nedra Williams, director of Adolescent Life Options Program at Roxbury Comprehensive Community Health Center, Roxbury, Massachusetts, described the aggressive nature of our society. Even our

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Conference highlights . . . continued

global problem solving, she pointed out, is done by aggressive means, "We go to war to solve our problems!" In this society, girls are taught to be quiet, stand still, and take whatever is given to them, and boys believe they have the right to inflict violence. Learning this type of behavior from the start of life leads to the subsequent belief that, if caught in an abusive relationship or even a violent situation, a teenage girl deserves it and won't walk away from it. The teenager blames herself, Williams continued, and finds herself isolated from her friends and family for fear that if she tells anyone it will bring about further violence from her boyfriend and curtailing of her independence from her parents.

Fernando Mederos, executive director of Common Purpose, Jamaica Plain, Massachusetts, works both with batterers in treatment programs and adolescents in awareness workshops. In his work with adults, Mederos recognizes the need to bring men into this kind of work as males are most often the perpetrators of battering violence and there is a need for more role models to help batterers. Mederos pointed to the negative messages men receive about how they should behave toward women. These include *dominance*, the feeling of always wanting to be on top; *entitlement*, feeling that they deserve something simply because they are men; and *objectification*, seeing women as objects instead of three-dimensional living beings.

In this culture, the teen male may not necessarily have made the connection that forced sex equals rape. That teen male is working with the societal myths that dictate that he is supposed to "score" and that the teen female he is with is supposed to "resist."

Mederos also runs workshops for adolescents that involve both females and males in discussion groups to increase their awareness and get them talking about violence issues such as sexual abuse and dating violence. In the beginning, as in real life, the boys dominate the discussion in the group and won't let the girls talk or express their feelings. Mederos then intervenes and acts as a role model for the boys, showing them that it's simply a matter of justice—they don't have to agree with each other, just let everyone talk. The girls begin to talk about the sexual violence that has occurred in their lives—the rape, the incest, the sexual harassment at school and work. The boys start to talk about the violence in their lives—they begin to own it and to realize that they've made mistakes in their treatment of girls. This acknowledgment of the problem is the first essential step to changing it.

The end result of these workshop discussions is that girls become more verbal about their lives and boys become more physically gentle, touching and hugging Mederos. For Mederos, that touch, which starts out as rough backslapping and pushing, translates into the acknowledgment of a physical and emotional emptiness that these boys grew up with. Boys need emotional and physical contact, Mederos emphasized, and these workshops begin to break down the barriers that prevent them from admitting that need.

Panelist Marianne Winters, executive director of Worcester Rape Crisis Center in Worcester, Massachusetts, then discussed adolescent culture as a sexually charged culture because of the new feelings and emotions that occur at this time in life. In this culture, the teen male may not necessarily have made the connection that forced sex equals rape. That teen male is working with the societal myths that dictate that he is supposed to "score" and that the teen female he is with is supposed to "resist." Working with those ideas, a boy tends to feel it is his right to have sex, even if the girl he is with says no.

Winters reminded the audience that adolescent culture is one filled with media bombardment of how a woman *should* look and act and the necessity to fit in. A girl might find it difficult to speak out, to accuse her boyfriend, or to get help because her friends may not be supportive; worse yet, they might think she is not "cool." A boy, on the other hand, rarely learns healthy ways to release his anger in this emotionally charged adolescent culture. He often doesn't learn respect for the body or even the words of his teen girlfriend; he learns that it is easier to hit her into submission than to understand or accept what she is trying to say.

Winters feels that sexual violence is a way for men to show power over women. For a woman to be a victim of any type of sexual assault or harassment could lead to lack of self-esteem and increased self-doubt. In such a situation, how can a woman imagine a successful life and career? In Winters' words, "[I]n that climate, [a woman] can't imagine that she can run for the Senate; [she can] barely imagine finishing high school." Winters called for increased services to help the girls and boys of the adolescent culture deal with their emotions. She suggests that counseling should be plentiful and free so that these teenagers have a place to turn to, to begin to understand and change what's happening in their violent lives.

When we realize the damage to human, and particularly to women's, lives—not just individually but through generations—we also realize the importance of examining this issue and acting to change it. The first steps have been taken, and we must continue down the road.

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Gender-based violence . . . continued

include teaching power structures in which males are more important than females, school tolerance of sexual harassment of females, and avoidance of issues such as date rape. There is already sufficient evidence to suggest that violence is a serious problem for adolescents and teenagers—studies indicate that at least one-third of young adults have experienced dating violence.[9]

A number of researchers have written about a "hidden curriculum" in schools, defined as the subtle influences on students that reinforce sexist and racist messages.[10] The hidden curriculum minimizes and maligns the contributions women have made. This is done in a variety of ways which, when viewed cumulatively, serve to reinforce sex-role stereotyping and promote violent and abusive behavior. Included here are such issues as females being excluded from texts, curricula, and history. In addition, findings reveal that males receive more teacher attention than females, boys receive more specific comments about their academic performance, that there are differences favoring males in task assignment, in teachers' expectations of students' behavior based on gender, as well as in such areas as overall curriculum design, classroom activities, and educational tracking (particularly in math, science, vocational courses, and extracurricular activities).[11]

These practices send different messages to males and females about their worth, their abilities, and their potential. Significantly, boys are more likely to attribute their achievements to their abilities, while girls attribute theirs to luck, depicting very different levels of self-confidence for males and females.[12] Furthermore, in promoting a dichotomy by gender, males learn to reject supposedly "feminine" qualities of cooperation and sensitivity in favor of competition and objectivity.[13] Such socialization only serves to lay the foundations for gender expectations based on male domination and female subordination.

While sexual harassment in schools is widespread, until very recently most schools did not even recognize it as an issue. Work by Eleanor Linn, Nan Stein, and colleagues shows that sexual harassment is "pervasive in all school districts, urban and rural," and that it often "takes on racial overtones."[14] Stein has also documented that students are harassed more often by their peers than by their teachers.[15]

Peer harassment can entail more than demeaning remarks. Bernice Sandler has documented a practice as common as bra snapping used to be, wherein a young man will grab a young woman and press his groin against her.[16] By not dealing with the violence against female students that happens within schools and during school activities, schools send a message of tolerance of it.

Schools also reinforce sex-role stereotyping and potential violence through what is termed the "evaded curriculum."[17] This term refers to those issues that greatly affect the quality of students' lives, but are rarely discussed within schools. Given the already documented incidence of abuse and violence in adolescents' lives, the avoidance of these issues reinforces the message that such matters are private and individual rather than societally based. This attitude only serves to cover up the extent of abuse and perpetuate the shame that such silence promotes.

Sexual harassment is "pervasive in all school districts, urban and rural," and . . . it often "takes on racial overtones."

Teaching nonviolence

There are many issues to consider in developing appropriate responses to the problem of gender-based violence. It is important to understand that such violence is complex and must be viewed in an interdisciplinary sense, one that bridges societal implications and their impact on individuals. Recognizing the seriousness of sexual and dating violence is of critical importance because it signals an air of condemnation for such behavior. Therefore, issues of violence must be addressed both as a problem affecting students and adults, and as a social issue to be discussed in the classroom.

Given adolescents' particular vulnerability to sexual and dating violence, educational programming must incorporate issues of sex-role stereotyping and gender expectations. Though violence prevention and conflict resolution programs emphasize qualities of cooperation and communication, they do not necessarily have a "gendered" perspective. In fact, a recent survey of young adolescent violence prevention programs reported that only 4 out of 51 programs specifically listed prevention of teen dating violence and/or rape as a goal.[18]

There are various ways to integrate sexual and dating violence issues in the curriculum, including incorporating such specific components as violence prevention, conflict resolution, gender equity, health education, and peer leadership programs. In addition, there already exist several curricula that specifically address sexual and/or dating violence, such as those in the states of Minnesota, Massachusetts, and California. Many rape crisis and battered women's programs also have educational components focusing on youth. However, most of these approaches depend upon individual class presentations without ensuring other aspects of necessary institutionalized support, including thorough staff training, curriculum integration, parent involvement, supportive services for male and female victims, and rehabilitative and disciplinary programs for abusers.

In addition to curricula, programs, and comprehensive support services, schools must take an unequivocal stand against sexist bias, harassment, and violence. A number of school districts and states are currently adopting sexual harassment policies.

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WEEA materials . . . continued

Sex Equity Handbook for Schools, by Myra Sadker and David Sadker, provides an overview of the critical areas of sex equity in schools, as well as practical strategies for the elimination of sex bias in education. Lesson plans and units are included along with a synopsis of the relevant research and a description of the nature of sex bias in today's classrooms.

An interpretation of male socialization is provided in *Understanding Sexual Violence: A Study of Convicted Rapists* by Diana Scully. Scully examines the structural supports for rape in sexually violent cultures and dispels a number of myths about sexual violence—for example, that childhood abuse, alcohol, and drugs are direct causes of rape. Scully also argues that the currently held view of rape solely as a crime of violence unrelated to sex is simply wrong; for some men, rape is sex, and indeed, sex is rape. Scully concludes with a discussion of what the rapists themselves had to say about rape avoidance.

. . . contains articles on . . . violence that is acted out in Saturday morning cartoons, the way women are treated in television shows, the violence in movies, and the way women are talked about by comedians.

The September/October 1990 issue of *Ms.*, entitled *Violence Against Women: A Ms. Report on Life in Our Times*, contains articles on the relationships of victims to offenders, on the violent acts that occurred during one particular day across the country, and on what our children are growing up with today—the violence that is acted out in Saturday morning cartoons, the way women are treated in television shows, the violence in movies, and the way women are talked about by comedians. Women's personal stories, together with articles on legislation, college fraternities, gang rape, and date rape also appear.

Videos

Five out of Five is a rap rock music video featuring New York Women Against Rape's Acting Out Teen Theater in an engaging, upbeat yet serious look at the problem of child and teen sexual abuse. The popular media form of musical video helps teens relate easily to the material. The video addresses the abuse of power that sexual assault represents, and the fear, pain, and isolation experienced by survivors. Teens are featured and talk about real experiences with sexual assault, as well as underlying themes of sex-role stereotypes and abuse of power.

In a new video, *Peer Power: Preventing Date Violence*, the You Can't Be Beat Theater Troupe (a group of trained peer leaders who write and perform scenes that illustrate date violence) acts out an all-too-common situation of a jealous male punching his girlfriend for dancing with another male friend. In the discussion that follows, peer leaders listen to young audience members who say they see the same type of behavior all the time, but don't know what to do about it. Together, they examine abusive behavior, including constant putdowns, emotional manipulation, and attacks on self-esteem that often later escalate into physical abuse. In the end viewers will understand who is ultimately responsible for abusive behavior in a relationship.

Heart on a Chain: The Truth About Date Violence is an informative program that addresses the issue of teenage date violence by speaking directly to young abusers and victims. Dramatically staged, it demonstrates the behaviors of several teenagers as each relates to a dating partner. Watching their interactions, the viewer will see a number of dating behaviors, ranging from abusive and controlling to healthy and open. Teenagers get a clear understanding of what constitutes abuse in a relationship, why it happens, and what a healthy, rewarding relationship is. The video is insightful, educational, and very well produced.

The WEEA Publishing Center materials may be purchased by mailing a check or money order for the amount of the order (plus $2 shipping for orders under $25; $4 for orders $25 and over) to the WEEA Publishing Center, 55 Chapel Street, Newton, MA 02160. To order by phone, using MasterCard, Visa, or purchase orders over $25, or for information on additional resources available through the WEEA Publishing Center, call 800-225-3088 (in Massachusetts call 617-969-7100).

WEEA products

Creating Sex-Fair Family Day Care: A Guide for Trainers, #2733 $10.50

Maximising Young Children's Potential: A Non-Sexist Manual for Early Childhood Trainers, #2121 $6.75

Fair Play: Decisions and You, Teacher's Guide, #2500 $12.00; **Decisions and You, Student Guide**, #2501 $8.75; **Decisions About Roles, Teacher's Guide**, #2502 $14.75; **Decisions About Roles, Student Guide**, #2503 $11.50; **Decisions About Language, Teacher's Guide**, #2509 $16.75; **Decisions About Language, Student Guide**, #2510 $11.50

Freedom for Individual Development (set), #2095 $28.00

Additional resources

Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents, by Deborah Prothrow-Stith
EDC Publishing Center
55 Chapel Street, Suite 24, Newton, MA 02160
(800)225-4276; (617)969-7100 (in Mass.)

Sex Equity Handbook for Schools, by Myra Sadker and David Sadker
Longman, Inc.
19 West 44th Street, New York, NY 10036

Understanding Sexual Violence: A Study of Convicted Rapists, by Diana Scully
Unwin Hyman, Inc.
995 Massachusetts Avenue, Cambridge, MA 02139

Ms. (Sept./Oct. 1990 issue)
230 Park Avenue, New York, NY 10169
(212)551-9595

Videos

Five out of Five
c/o Women Make Movies
225 Lafayette Street, Suite 211, New York, NY 10012
(212)925-0606

Peer Power: Preventing Date Violence and **Heart on a Chain: The Truth About Date Violence**
c/o MTI/Film + Video
420 Academy Drive, Northbrook, IL 60062
(800)621-2131

Other sources of information

Skills for a Violence Free Relationship: Curriculum for Young People, by Barrie Levy
Southern California Coalition on Battered Women
P.O. Box 5036, Santa Monica, CA 90405

Preventing Teen Dating Violence: A Three-Session Curriculum for Teaching Adolescents and **Respect Can't Be Beat: Peer Leader Training Manual**
Dating Violence Intervention Project
P.O. Box 530, Harvard Square Station,
Cambridge, MA 02238
(617)868-8328

National Coalition Against Sexual Assault
2428 Ontario Road, NW, Washington, DC 20009
(202)483-7165

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The incidence of sexual and dating violence has critical implications for education and therefore requires a broad and comprehensive approach. This work cannot be done in one arena alone because the issues themselves are so pervasive. The critical feature of creating diverse opportunities is to break the silence and to empower young people, because such violence undermines the foundations of respect and equity that ought to define human relationships.

Debra Robbin is a consultant and project director at several violence prevention programs in Boston, including the AWAKE Project at Children's Hospital and Casa Myrna Vazquez. For several years, she served as executive director of the New Bedford Women's Center and recently completed her Ed.M. at Harvard Graduate School of Education where she studied the relationship between gender equity and violence against women.

Notes

[1]*Fact Sheets on Battering* (Washington, D.C.: National Woman Abuse Prevention Project, 1992).
[2]"The Killing Numbers," *Ms.* (September–October 1990): 45.
[3]"The Killing Numbers."
[4]Myra Sadker and David Sadker, *Sex Equity Handbook for Schools* (New York: Longman, 1982); *Handbook for Achieving Sex Equity Through Education*, ed. by Susan Klein (Baltimore, Md.: The Johns Hopkins University Press, 1985); Beverly A. Stitt, *Building Gender Fairness in Schools* (Carbondale, Ill.: Southern Illinois Press, 1988); Elinor Horowitz, "Shortchanging Girls, Shortchanging America," *American Association of University Women Outlook* 85 (April–May 1991): 16–19.
[5]Del Martin, *Battered Wives* (New York: Pocketbooks, 1976).
[6]Susan Schechter, *Women and Male Violence* (Boston: South End Press, 1982).
[7]Sundra Flansburg, "Building a Self: Teenaged Girls and Issues of Self-Esteem," *WEEA Digest* (September 1991); Debra Boyer and David Fine, "Sexual Abuse as a Factor in Adolescent Pregnancy and Child Maltreatment," *Family Planning Perspectives* 24 (January/February 1992); Wellesley College Center for Research on Women, *The AAUW Report: How Schools Shortchange Girls* (Washington, D.C.: AAUW Educational Foundation, 1992); Conversation with Candace Waldron, Massachusetts Department of Public Health; Nan D. Stein, "It Happens Here, Too: Sexual Harassment in the Schools," *Education Week*, November 27, 1991; Barrie Levy, ed., *Dating Violence: Young Women in Danger* (Seattle, Wash.: Seal Press, 1991).
[8]Candace Waldron, *Shattering the Myths: Sexual Assault in Massachusetts 1985–1987* (Boston: Massachusetts Department of Public Health, 1990).
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[19]Bernice Sandler, Center for Women Policy Studies, in speech to National Coalition for Sex Equity in Education Conference, July 1992, Rapid City, South Dakota.
[20]AAUW, 75.
[21]Renée Wilson-Brewer, Stu Cohen, Lydia O'Donnell, Irene Goodman, *Violence Prevention for Young Adolescents: A Survey of the State of the Art* (Newton, Mass.: Education Development Center, 1991).

The critical feature of creating diverse opportunities is to break the silence and to empower young people, because such violence undermines the foundations of respect and equity that ought to define human relationships.

WEEA materials help reduce gender-based violence

The Women's Educational Equity Act (WEEA) Program has funded many projects that address some of the important issues that can help reduce violence against women. Innovative research materials and curricula developed in these projects are distributed by the WEEA Publishing Center.

Start early

Education needs to begin with children at an early age to reduce sex-role stereotyping and to create a nonsexist environment that counters the message of violence. *Creating Sex-Fair Family Day Care: A Guide for Trainers* offers guidance to day care providers to develop activities that will be inclusive of both genders and help eliminate the effects of sex-role stereotyping. By promoting nonstereotyped play, day care providers communicate positive messages to children, reinforcing that it is okay to cross the sex-stereotyped boundaries, and enabling children, male and female, to learn to work and play together successfully.

Maximizing Young Children's Potential shows teachers how to use workshops to address issues of inequity and create a nonsexist environment for the children in their classrooms. It also includes training resources and an extensive bibliography for both parents and educators.

Middle school as the key

The transition from childhood to adolescence brings about changes in relationships between males and females and the peer pressures that go along with them. *Fair Play: Developing Self-Concept and Decision-Making Skills in the Middle School* is an effective set of manuals that can help students learn how cultural values, historical stereotypes, and group pressures can shape our self-concept. Three modules, *Decisions and You, Decisions About Roles,* and *Decisions About Language,* help adolescents learn about and explore personal and group decision-making skills, choose and define their own roles, avoid the limitations of peer pressure and sex-role stereotyping, and recognize the subtle ways that bias is communicated through language.

Not only is it important for young adolescents to understand the possible outcomes of sex-role stereotyping, but it is also important that the community understands. *Freedom for Individual Development* seeks to involve the community as well as the school system in understanding the effects of stereotyping on attitudes and behavior, in becoming aware of the traditional concepts of masculinity and femininity associated with sex-role stereotyping, and in encouraging parents, educators, and community members to take an active part in eliminating sexist practices in school and the community.

Additional resources of interest

Additionally, educators interested in reducing violence can use a range of materials including *Violence Prevention Curriculum for Adolescents* by Deborah Prothrow-Stith. Addressing the growing problems of violence and homicide among young people, the curriculum has had a positive impact in many of the schools in which it has been used, and has received widespread media attention. The curriculum acknowledges anger as a normal and natural emotion, provides hard-hitting facts to alert students to their high risk of being either the victim or the perpetrator of a violent act, and offers positive ways to deal with anger and arguments, the leading precipitants of homicide.

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